

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 072946

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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 285 - MARCH 31, 1977

1. EGYPT. RECENT COMMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM BY SADAT AND THE EGYPTIAN PRESS HAVE HIGHLIGHTED THE POSITIVE IN SETTING THE STAGE FOR SADAT'S US VISIT NEXT WEEK. CONTINUING PROCEDURAL PROBLEMS WITH RESPECT TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE HAVE BEEN DOWNPLAYED IN THE PRESS, AS HAS SADAT'S DISAGREEMENT WITH ARAFAT OVER THE LINKAGE BETWEEN THE PLO AND JORDAN BEFORE THE GENEVA TALKS.
2. THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE, IN THE EGYPTIAN VIEW, IS CENTRAL TO THE PROBLEM OF RECONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. SADAT WILL PROBABLY PUSH DURING HIS VISIT FOR A US-PALESTINIAN DIALOGUE. HE STATED IN A MARCH 27 INTERVIEW THAT SUCH A DIALOGUE WOULD RESOLVE MANY OF THE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS HINDERING THE RESUMPTION OF GENEVA TALKS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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3. LEBANON. IN THE FIRST MAJOR GROUND ACTION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON IN SEVERAL WEEKS, RIGHTIST FORCES YESTERDAY CAPTURED TWO VILLAGES JUST SOUTH OF THE LITANI. IN THE SEESAW BATTLE FOR THESE VILLAGES OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, THE RIGHTISTS HAD CAPTURED THEM, BUT LACKED THE MANPOWER TO HOLD THEM FOR LONG. NEVERTHELESS, THE

REPORTED INCREASE IN RIGHTIST FORCES IN THE SOUTH TO ABOUT 2,500 MEN MAY PERMIT THE CONTINUED OCCUPATION OF THESE VILLAGES. IF THAT HAPPENS, THE RIGHTISTS MAY BE ABLE TO CONVINCE MORE OF THE CONSERVATIVE LOCAL SHIITES TO JOIN FORCES WITH THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS.

4. UNDER PRESSURE FROM PRESIDENT SARKIS, THE PHALANGE AND THE SYRIANS, THE CHRISTIANS RIGHTISTS CALLED OFF THEIR STRIKE YESTERDAY. TO PURSUE THE ISSUE WOULD HAVE LED TO A SERIOUS SETBACK FOR SHAMOUN. THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE AGREED TO MEET ON FRIDAY TO RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES.

5. EMBASSY DAMASCUS REPORTED THAT THE SYRIANS ARE EXTREMELY UNHAPPY WITH THE OPPOSITION OF THE SHAMOUNISTS AND OTHERS TO THE REMOVAL OF HANNA SAID AS LEBANESE ARMY COMMANDER. AMBASSADOR MURPHY COMMENTED THAT THE RECENT SYRIAN PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST HARDLINE CHRISTIANS MAY WELL BE A SIGNAL TO THESE ELEMENTS THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE REACHED THE LIMITS OF THEIR PATIENCE AND WILL NOT TOLERATE FURTHER EFFORTS TO HINDER OR UNDERMINE SARKIS. IN THIS VEIN, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES IT IS LIKELY THAT THE SYRIANS ARE HOPING TO SPLIT THE MORE MODERATE PHALANGE FROM THE HARDLINERS (A PHALANGE DELEGATION IS CURRENTLY VISITING DAMASCUS). THE LEBANESE MUSLIM PARTIES, WHICH ARE PRO-SYRIA, HAVE REPORTEDLY FORMED A NEW POLITICAL FRONT TO BOLSTER SARKIS.

6. OUR BEIRUT DEFENSE ATTACHE REPORTED THAT, ACCORDING
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TO HIS SOURCES, THE LEADER OF THE LEFTIST LEBANESE ARAB ARMY, ACHMED KHATIB HAS BEEN RELEASED BY THE SYRIANS SYRIANS IN JANUARY DURING THEIR CRACKDOWN ON LEFTIST GROUPS.
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7. WEST BANK. ISRAELI ARABS HELD SEVERAL ORGANIZED PEACEFUL RALLIES IN THE GALILEE YESTERDAY ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF "LAND DAY" (A 1976 PROTEST AGAINST EXPROPRIATION OF ARAB LAND IN THE GALILEE), ACCORDING TO EMBASSY TEL AVIV. ON THE WEST BANK, HOWEVER, VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS OCCURRED IN SEVERAL TOWNS AND A BOMB EXPLODED IN A JEWISH RESTAURANT IN HEBRON. AN ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL DESCRIBED THE OVERALL SITUATION AS "BETTER THAN EXPECTED" AND SAID THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS OF DEAD OR INJURED IN THE DEMONSTRATIONS.

8. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY BONN, A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL SAID THAT ALLON HAD TOLD FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS WITHDRAWN ITS PLANS TO ESTABLISH SMALL SETTLEMENTS IN HEAVILY POPULATED

AREAS OF THE WEST BANK. INSTEAD, SETTLEMENTS WILL BE RESTRICTED TO THE BORDER AREAS IN THE JORDAN VALLEY, GAZA, AND THE GOLAN. ALLON REPORTEDLY ASSERTED THAT THESE LATTER SETTLEMENTS ARE NOT AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE, BUT RATHER SERVE TO GIVE ISRAEL NEGOTIATING LEVERAGE.

9. FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER GUIRINGAUD IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE AS SCHEDULED TODAY FOR A STATE VISIT TO ISRAEL, DESPITE THE RESHUFFLE OF THE FRENCH CABINET.

10. AN OFFICIAL ECUADOREAN GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN HAS ADMITTED THE POSSIBILITY THAT ISRAEL HAS MADE ANOTHER OFFER TO SELL COMBAT PLANES TO THE ECUADOREAN ARMED FORCES, ACCORDING TO A SPANISH PRESS REPORT. DURING A MARCH 29 NEWS CONFERENCE, THE SPOKESMAN REFERRED TO REPORTS THAT ISRAEL IS PLANNING TO SELL ECUADOR 24 NESHER AIRPLANES, WHICH ARE SIMILAR TO THE MIRAGE AND EQUIPPED
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WITH DASSAULT ENGINES. (CONFIDENTIAL)

11. PALESTINIANS. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY LONDON, THE DEPUTY HEAD OF THE PLO'S POLITICAL DEPARTMENT, SAYED KAMAL, TOLD THE BRITISH THAT ARTICLE 15 WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT IN THE PNC'S POLITICAL DECLARATION. THE NEGOTIATING MANDATE IN THIS ARTICLE, KAMAL SAID, IS NOT LINKED EXCLUSIVELY TO UNGA RESOLUTION 3236, BUT TO ANY "INTERNATIONAL RESOLUTIONS SINCE 1974" (THUS IMPLYING SOME PLO FLEXIBILITY ON WHAT THE BASIS FOR A PLO INVITATION TO GENEVA COULD BE). IN THIS VEIN, KAMAL ADDED THAT THE PLO NOW WANTED TO GO TO GENEVA, BUT THAT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR THE SECURITY COUNCIL TO ADOPT A NEW RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE PALESTINIAN RIGHT TO A SEPARATE STATE. (CONFIDENTIAL)

12. UN. THE SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON WALDHEIM'S MIDEAST REPORT ADJOURNED SINE DIE FOLLOWING THE MARCH 29 SESSION. ACCORDING TO OUR UN MISSION, THE ADJOURNMENT CAME AFTER THE EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY INSTRUCTED AMBASSADOR MEGUID TO AGREE TO THIS. IT IS PROBABLE THAT FAHMY HAS NOW CALCULATED THAT THE LIKELY US VETO OF THE EGYPTIAN DRAFT CONSENSUS STATEMENT WOULD BE DETRIMENTAL TO SADAT'S WASHINGTON VISIT NEXT WEEK.
(CONFIDENTIAL)
CHRISTOPHER

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